

St. Teresa of Avila
and the reform of the Carmelites

McGill Newman Centre
Wednesday, March 20, 1991

I. Background (1515-1582)

- a. from family of lesser nobility in Spain with roots to judiasm through her grandfather who was a "converso"
- b. loved to read romances, etc.
- c. 1531-6 boarder at convent of Our Lady of Grace
- d. in 1536 enters Carmelite convent of the Incarnation (Teresa of Jesus) and lives a luke warm religious life until an inner conversion in 1554 resulting from a rereading of the Confessions of St. Augustine and contemplation of a crucifix
- e. not until 1562 (26 years later) founded first convent of the Carmelite Reform
- f. 1565 wrote her autobiography Life and begins Way of Perfection; in 1559 many spiritual books in the vernacular forbidden by the Index
- g. between 1562 and 1575 she makes ten more foundations; in 1572 she burned a copy of a commentary on the Song of Songs because Luis de Leon was accused before the Inquisition of translating the Song of Songs into Spanish. He was imprisoned and tortured for 4 years, and later after his release and her death he became the first editor of her works.
- h. 1577 writes The Interior Castle
- i. then makes three more new foundations before she dies in 1582.
- j. 1617 St. Teresa is canonized
- k. in 1950 she is proclaimed Doctor of the Church

II. Context of her reform

1. The Spanish renaissance
 - a. discovery of science and culture
 - b. she ~~is a contemporary of~~ Descartes and the foundation of modern philosophy *just precedes*

2. The Protestant reformation
 - a. Concern about the corruption in the Catholic Church and with her own religious community (Bilinkoff 396)
 - b. Concern about the establishment of schisms in the various forms of Protestant religions break with Catholic Faith

3. The Catholic counter reformation .
 - a. Concern about the Inquisition and false mysticism or illuminati (CW 58-9)
 - b. The council of Trent (1545-1564) - *renewed emphasis on women*

III. Her own sources of renewal

1. Life of prayer Otilio Rogrigues in Wands (8-19) Egan -15; (Aumann, 54)
2. Spritual direction (CW 4-5)
3. Spritual reading (CW-2-3)
4. A vigorous (philosophical) mind in the pursuit of authentic self knowledge (CW- 19;) and (CW- 38-39- 39a for chart)

IV. St. Teresa's unique contributions to Carmelite Spirituality and to the Church

Pray without ceasing (WJP 53)

1. The call to prayer and spiritual growth (Paper on TofA)
 - a. four levels (analogy with watering garden) in Life
 - b. seven levels (analogy with castle) in Interior Castle
2. An emphasis on integration of body and soul
3. An emphasis on renewed value of the evangelical counsels (The Way to Perfection) - von Salmsen (269-273), (WJP 41-2)
 - a. poverty (e.g. conflict about having no dowery) (Bilinkoff, 349-50; 353-4)
 - b. chastity (e.g. rejection of sociality of old way) (Bilinkoff -351) - pur. of senses
 - c. obedience (e.g. all her writings through this)
 To rule & spiritual director To superiors -
4. An emphasis on the common life as the way to holiness
 - a. convent life (communities of 12+1) (~~supra~~ life 247-8)
 - b. spiritual friendships (e.g. St. John of the Cross) (WJP 66-7), Rodriguez 8-9
 - c. the practice of the virtues (eg. letter to Bishop (CW 47) her state in the foundations (CW 60-6); persistance in foundations (CW 62-63)
5. an emphasis on the union of the desire of the person and the desire of God, (Fitzgerald 65, 67, 89)
 Soliloquies I (389)

Vol. 1 + Vol. 2
 I want to see God + Dialogues of the Church
 Father Maria Egan of the Church Jesus,
 quoted by Charles Clarrico. OCO